

Afternoon Tea delight



Afternoon Tea has enjoyed a resurgence, with hotels, restaurants and cafés up and down the country serving their delicious take on the tradition. Care homes have embraced the trend too. Gill Thrush, head of hospitality for Harrogate Neighbours Housing Association, tells us why it's so good for residents' health and wellbeing.

How often do you serve Afternoon Tea?

Our residents can enjoy an Afternoon Tea at least once a week.

What are the benefits of Afternoon Tea?

It's a fantastic way to encourage residents to eat and drink, and to enjoy doing so.

It's easy to tailor Afternoon Tea to the needs of individuals without drawing attention to them. If a resident needs more fluids, for example, they can be encouraged to drink more and they don't feel singled out because everyone else is doing the same.

Afternoon Tea is like a social get together and this makes it much easier to get residents to eat. When invited to help

themselves to a choice of sandwiches, scones and cakes and so on, we find they eat more because there's less pressure than when their food is put in front of them. And, with everyone saying how tasty things are and 'you must try this', there's plenty of resident-to-resident encouragement too – and they don't even realise they're doing it!

Conversation also always turns to reminiscing about what they ate when they were younger, which they thoroughly enjoy and is great stimulation. Popular topics include whether to have crusts on or off sandwiches, favourite fillings (cucumber sandwiches and potted beef are winners) and, of course, what goes on the scone first, the jam or the cream? This always create giggles of enjoyment.

Top: Afternoon Tea al fresco at the Harrogate Neighbours' 50th celebration

Bottom left: Enjoying an ice cream

Bottom right: Harrogate Neighbours street party – all welcome!

HARROGATE NEIGHBOUR'S MELTING MOMENTS

Makes approximately 30 biscuits

Gill says: "Our head chef, Stephen, makes these biscuits fresh every day for our residents and visitors. They smell delicious and taste fantastic, and they're perfect for Afternoon Tea."

INGREDIENTS

- ▶ 5oz margarine
- ▶ 3oz lard
- ▶ 6oz caster sugar
- ▶ 1 egg
- ▶ 10ml vanilla essence
- ▶ 10oz self-raising flour
- ▶ cherries for the top

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Combine all the ingredients to form a biscuit dough.
3. Roll into balls and put on a baking tray lined with greaseproof paper.
4. Put a cherry on top of each ball and bake in the oven for 10 mins.



Above: Striking a pose for Harrogate Neighbour's 50th anniversary

Do you theme Afternoon Teas?

We often theme an Afternoon Tea to a national event, such as Wimbledon, royal occasions and so on, but the vintage theme remains the most popular. We invested in some vintage crockery especially for Afternoon Tea and the residents love it. Drinking from the beautiful cups and saucers and arranging their food on the pretty plates is part of the experience and it makes them feel very special.

To celebrate 50 years of Harrogate Neighbours in July, we held a street party and served Afternoon Tea for 220 people. This was a fantastic event that we shared with friends, relatives and the community, and the residents loved sharing their memories of the street parties they'd been to in the past, such as the wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana and right back even to the Queen's Coronation.

How do you create the menus?

We get the residents involved! They are your best and your worst critics, so involving them from the outset is the secret to success. They tell us what they want to eat and we incorporate this into the menu. The chefs also love interacting with the residents, so it makes the whole experience more enjoyable for all.

GILL'S TOP AFTERNOON TEA TIPS

- ▶ Involve residents and their families in the planning
- ▶ Involve all the care home staff too. Including everyone results in something very special
- ▶ Plan an afternoon tea that works for your care home and residents. It doesn't have to be a big event, but careful planning and preparation is key
- ▶ If you can, invest in bespoke crockery and/or decorations that are just for Afternoon Tea. Our vintage crockery and dressings have been our very best investment
- ▶ Offer choice to engage residents and inspire conversation. We have three drink choices: Tea at the Manor, served in vintage crockery; Builder's tea in a mug with the teabag still in; and posh coffee (rather than latte or cappuccino), which makes residents ask what's posh about it. This approach also considers residents' ability to hold different types of cups
- ▶ Always have plenty of cake and enjoy!



What feedback do the residents give?

The absolutely love it. They love the food and the social element Afternoon Tea offers. We invite family and friends to join in, and local community groups such as Dancing for Wellbeing and Supporting Older People. Our residents really thrive on the change of scenery (Afternoon Tea is served in the lounge rather than the dining room) and having someone new to share food with and to talk to.